

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 19, 2011

The Honorable Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As you work with Congress to reach a deficit reduction agreement, we urge you to reject any proposals that reduce the Pell Grant maximum award or make harmful changes to Pell's eligibility requirements.

Increasing access to a college education is key to ensuring our nation's long-term economic prosperity. In the 21st century economy, a college education is a prerequisite for a good job with a family-sustaining wage. If we do not increase our investment in post-secondary educational attainment, American workers will not have the necessary skills to compete in the global economy, and their access to the middle class will continue to erode.

For more than nine million students, Pell Grants make a college education possible. However, even with recent increases in the maximum Pell award, these grants only cover about one-third of the cost of attending a four-year public college, less than half of what they covered 30 years ago. The Fiscal Year 2011 budget agreement already cut \$4 billion a year from the Pell Grant program by eliminating the summer Pell Grant. Any further cuts during this critical period would have devastating and unacceptable long-term consequences for students, working families, and the economy.

We recognize that hard choices need to be made to address the nation's debt crisis. However, cuts to the Pell Grant program would undermine our efforts to address our debt in the long run by damaging our economy. We cannot win the future without investing in a strong Pell Grant program.

Sincerely,



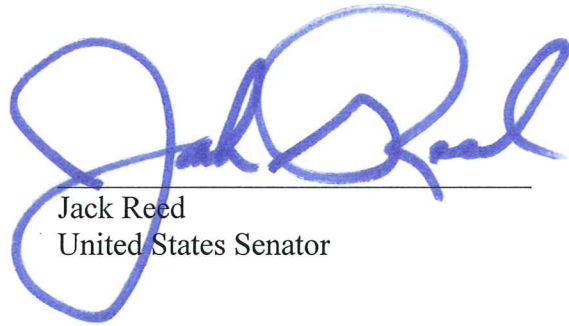
Al Franken
United States Senator



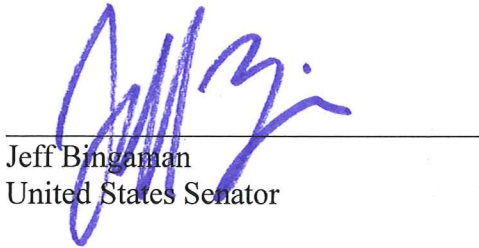
Kirsten E. Gillibrand
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator



Jeff Bingaman
United States Senator



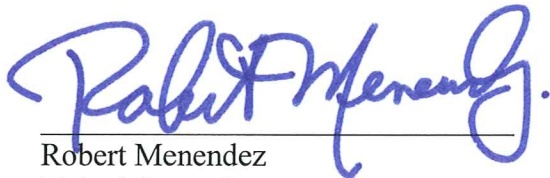
Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



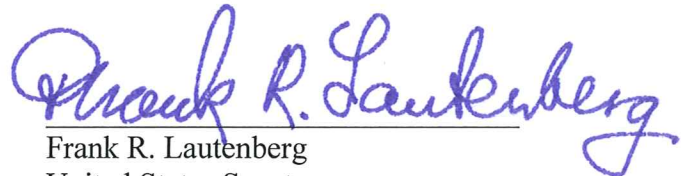
Daniel K. Akaka
United States Senator



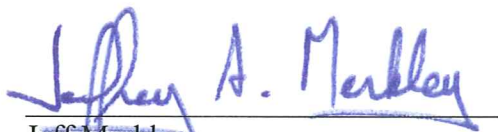
Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Frank R. Lautenberg
United States Senator



Jeff Merkley
United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator